

COCHISE COUNTY LOCAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA

Geography

Cochise County, better known as "Tombstone Territory" to the nation's television watchers of the 1950's, is Arizona's southeastern-most county. It borders Mexico and New Mexico, and retains an ambiance of the old west that is vanishing in much of modern Arizona. While its colorful history recounts the presence of the Chiricahua Apache tribe, and its namesake originates from the most famous of the old-west Apaches, ironically, Cochise County has no Indian reservations. Hence, the boundaries of Cochise County and its WIA Local Workforce Investment Area are the same.

Although Cochise County tourists can taste the flavor of the old west in places like the Crystal Palace in Tombstone, or in any saloon in Bisbee's Brewery Gulch, Cochise County is well involved in modern economic events. Fort Huachuca, established more than 100 years ago to protect settlers from Indian raids, remains a dominant but presently stable feature of the local economy.

Population

According to the most recent official population figures, produced by US Census Bureau, mid-year estimates for 2000 show 117,755 people reside in Cochise County. This resident population accounts for 2.3 percent of state of Arizona's total population. In the ten years since the 1990 census, Cochise County's population grew by 20.6 percent, or roughly 1.9 percent annually compared to the state as a whole which grew over 40 percent for the same period. Sierra Vista is the largest city in the county, with an estimated population of 37,775. Douglas is the next largest, with an estimated population of 14,312.

Income

According to data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis from 1990 to 1999, local total personal income in Cochise County increased 54.4 percent compared to the State's nearly 90 percent. However, on a per capita basis, the gain of 34 percent was below the State's growth of 46.3 percent. Cochise County per capita income was \$18,797 in 1999, about 75 percent of the state average, down from 81.5 percent in 1990. Average earnings per job increased 0.8 percent in 1999 to \$27,284 – 3.3 percent less than the gain for the state of 4.1 percent.

Labor Force

The Cochise County labor force fell roughly 2 percent each year from 1995 to 2000. Cochise County employment figures fell less, however, with an average annual decrease of about 1.0 percent. This affected the unemployment rate downward from 9.2 percent in 1995 to 4.5 percent in 2000.

Employment

Total nonfarm employment in Cochise County averaged 2 percent average yearly growth from 1995-2000. The largest growth occurred in construction, which had average growth of 5.5 percent for the period. Services and trade also registered impressive gains at an average of 4.8 and 2.6 percent respectively. TCPU saw the largest losses for the period losing 175 jobs or 2.3 percent per year.

Government is the largest employer in Cochise County with 11,125 workers in 2000. Second is the Services sector with an employment level of 8,275, and a close third is transportation, communications, and public utilities with 7,600. These three industries account for over 84% of the total Cochise County employment 2000.

Growing and Declining

During the year 2000, the largest industry job growth was experienced in computer and data processing services (+438 jobs), residential building construction (+424 jobs), and residential care (+166 jobs). The largest employment losses appeared in management and public relations (-231 jobs), nursing and personal care facilities (-212 jobs), and nonresidential building construction (-192). For further details see the enclosed tables.

Forecast

Research Administration is forecasting employment growth to accelerate from 1.0 percent in PY 01-02 to 2.6 percent in PY 02-03. Countywide unemployment is expected to decrease slightly from the PY 00-01 rate of 4.5 percent to 4.3 percent in PY 01-02 and remain unchanged at 4.3 percent in PY 02-03.

Issues of Concern

- Slow population growth
- Slow growth in average earnings per job

Source: Arizona Department of Economic Security, Research Administration, November 2001.